



WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATIONS BUREAU

FACT SHEET

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
445 12th STREET, S.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20554

PR5000

Number 201
January 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT AMATEUR RADIO

The amateur and amateur-satellite services are for qualified persons of any age who are interested in radio technique solely with a personal aim and without pecuniary interest. These services present an opportunity for self-training, intercommunication, and technical investigations. Twenty-seven small frequency bands throughout the spectrum are allocated to this service internationally. Some 1,300 digital, analog, pulse, and spread-spectrum emission types may be transmitted. Millions of amateur operators in all areas of the world communicate with each other directly or through *ad hoc* relay systems and amateur-satellites. They exchange messages by voice, teleprinting, telegraphy, facsimile, and television. In areas where the services are served by the FCC, an amateur operator must have an FCC or Canadian license. FCC-issued *Reciprocal Permit for Alien Amateur Licensee* are no longer needed. Reciprocal operation in the U.S. is now authorized by rule 47 C.F.R. 97.107.

All frequencies are shared. No frequency is assigned for the exclusive use of any amateur station. Station control operators cooperate in selecting transmitting channels to make the most effective use of the frequencies. They design, construct, modify, and repair their stations. The FCC equipment authorization program does not generally apply to amateur station transmitters. There are six classes of operator license, each authorizing varying levels of privileges. The class for which each examinee is qualified is determined by the degree of skill and knowledge in operating a station that the examinee demonstrates to volunteer examiners (VEs) in his or her community. Most new amateur operators start at the Technician class and then advance one class at a time. The VEs give examination credit for the license class currently held so that examinations required for that license need not be repeated. The VEs construct the written examinations from question pools that have been made public. Helpful study guides and training courses are widely available.

OPERATOR LICENSES:

The privileges of a **Technician Class** operator license include operating stations while transmitting on channels in any of 17 frequency bands above 50 MHz with up to 1,500 watts power. It also authorizes the person to serve as a VE in helping to prepare certain examinations. To pass the Technician Class examination, at least 48 questions from a two-part 65 question written examination must be answered correctly.

The next step is **Technician Plus Class** operator. This license adds privileges in four long distance, shortwave bands in the HF range (3-30 MHz). In addition to the above written examination, a short, slow-speed telegraphy examination at 5 words-per-minute (wpm) must be passed.

The General Class operator license carries privileges in all 27 bands. Upon accreditation by a volunteer-examiner coordinator (VEC), an individual can help administer certain examinations. In addition to the above written examination, the requirement includes a 25 question examination for which 19 correctly answered questions is the minimum passing score. A medium-speed telegraphy examination at 13 wpm must also be passed.

The privileges of an **Advanced Operator class** license includes 275 kHz of additional spectrum in the HF bands. In addition to all of the above written examinations, the requirement includes a 50 question written examination for which 37 correctly answered questions is the minimum passing score.

The privileges of an **Amateur Extra Operator class** license includes still more spectrum, 175 kHz in the HF bands. In addition to all of the above written examinations, the requirement includes a 40 question written examination for which 30 correctly answered questions is the minimum passing score. A high-speed telegraphy examination at 20 wpm must also be passed.

There is also the **Novice Operator class** for persons who pass the slow speed telegraphy examination, but only pass the first part of the written examination for Technician Class. Passing requires answering correctly at least 26 of 35 questions. Privileges include four bands in the HF range, one band in the VHF range (30-300 MHz), and one band in the UHF range (300-3,000 MHz).

Contact the VEs in your community or one of the VECs for information on preparing for an examination and for help in finding an examination session. They are permitted to charge a small fee to recover their out-of-pocket costs in administering an examination.

The VEs employ special procedures to accommodate examinees with disabilities. They also give credit for the 13 or 20 wpm telegraphy examination to persons who have passed the slow speed telegraphy examination, but cannot pass the higher speed examinations because of a physician-certified disability. Because of international requirements, no waiver of the 5 wpm requirement can be granted.

FCC Form 605 (Main Form and Schedule D) is used for Amateur Radio Service licensing and replaces FCC Forms 610 and 610R. On-line filing by the applicant is available from the ULS homepage at <http://www.fcc.gov/wtb/uls>. Form 605 is also available for downloading from the FCC's Internet homepage at <http://www.fcc.gov/formpage.html>, from the Fax-on-demand system by calling (202) 418-0177 from the handset of a fax machine, or from the FCC's forms contractor by calling (800) 418-FORM (3676).